


# Emergency Access Route

EMERGENCY ACCESS ROUTE WORKING GROUP

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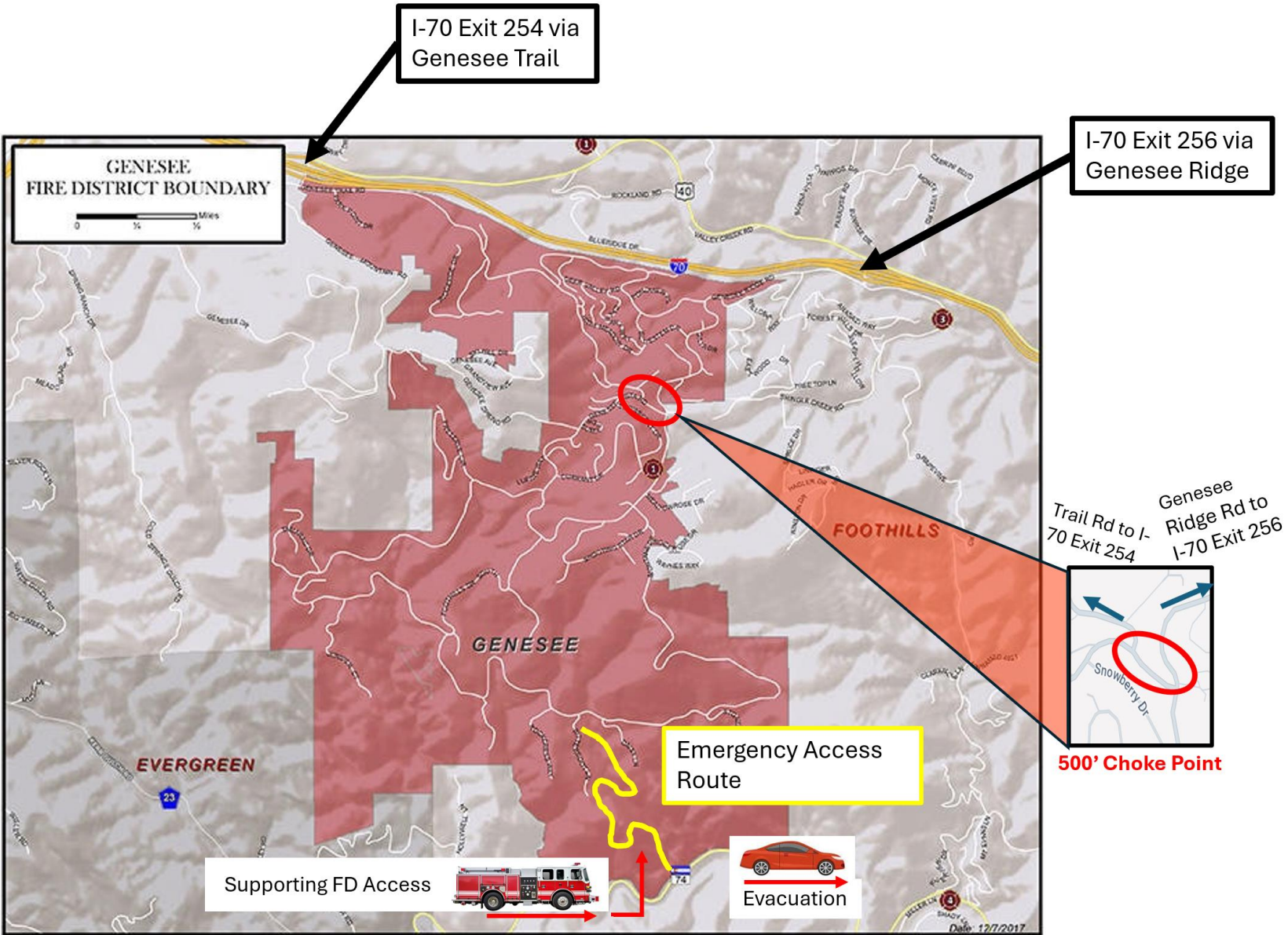


# Key Questions and Issues

- What is it?
  - Why is it needed?
  - How does it fit within the overall Fire Safety Plan?
  - How will it be used?
  - Who will benefit?
  - Where are we in the process?
  - How did we get here?
  - Community Engagement to Date
  - What's next?
  - Questions, Myths, and Misconceptions
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# What is the Emergency Access Route?

- **Emergency Access Route** is a project of the Genesee Fire Protection District
- An important tool for firefighting
  - Gives emergency equipment the ability to enter Genesee Fire Protection District from both the North (I-70) and the South (Highway 74).
  - Allows evacuation to both the North and South.
  - How the route is used will depend on the specifics of the fire, but the options it provides will improve both emergency response time and evacuation times.
- Twenty-four feet wide road, consisting of two 9-foot travel lanes with 3-foot-wide shoulders on either side.
- Two-lane natural surface road designed to allow both two way and one way traffic in and out of Genesee; curves will be wide enough to accommodate fire apparatus.
- The route is designed in accordance with Genesee Fire District requirements and fulfills Jefferson County standards.
- Many Genesee community leaders and residents, along with fire mitigation experts, have spent significant amounts of time, research, effort, and resources to guide the project



# Why Is It Needed?



Elephant Butte Fire (2020)

- A secondary access road was recommended in the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) prepared in 2008 and updated in 2021.
- The addition of a secondary ingress/egress route is a critical tool that, when coupled with roadway mitigation, increases roadway survivability for both residents and first responders.
- Provides a secondary means of egress - the primary access if the I-70 evacuation route is compromised.
- Provides an ingress route for emergency responders and gives firefighters the ability to defend GFPD from a fire approaching from the south/west.
- Gives firefighters a safe way to escape should fire conditions warrant it.



# CWPP (Community Wildfire Protection Plan)



The Fire District is at **high risk** for large, high-severity wildfires due to dense forest conditions, dry and hot weather, and strong, gusty winds.



**Increasing drought and warming temperatures** exacerbate wildfire risk in the area.



Genesee Fire Rescue and residents in the GFPD must prepare for large wildfire events. **Proactive work is imperative.**



There are currently **no areas within GFPD that could serve as a fully safe area** to shelter in place due to steep slopes and heavy fuel loads.

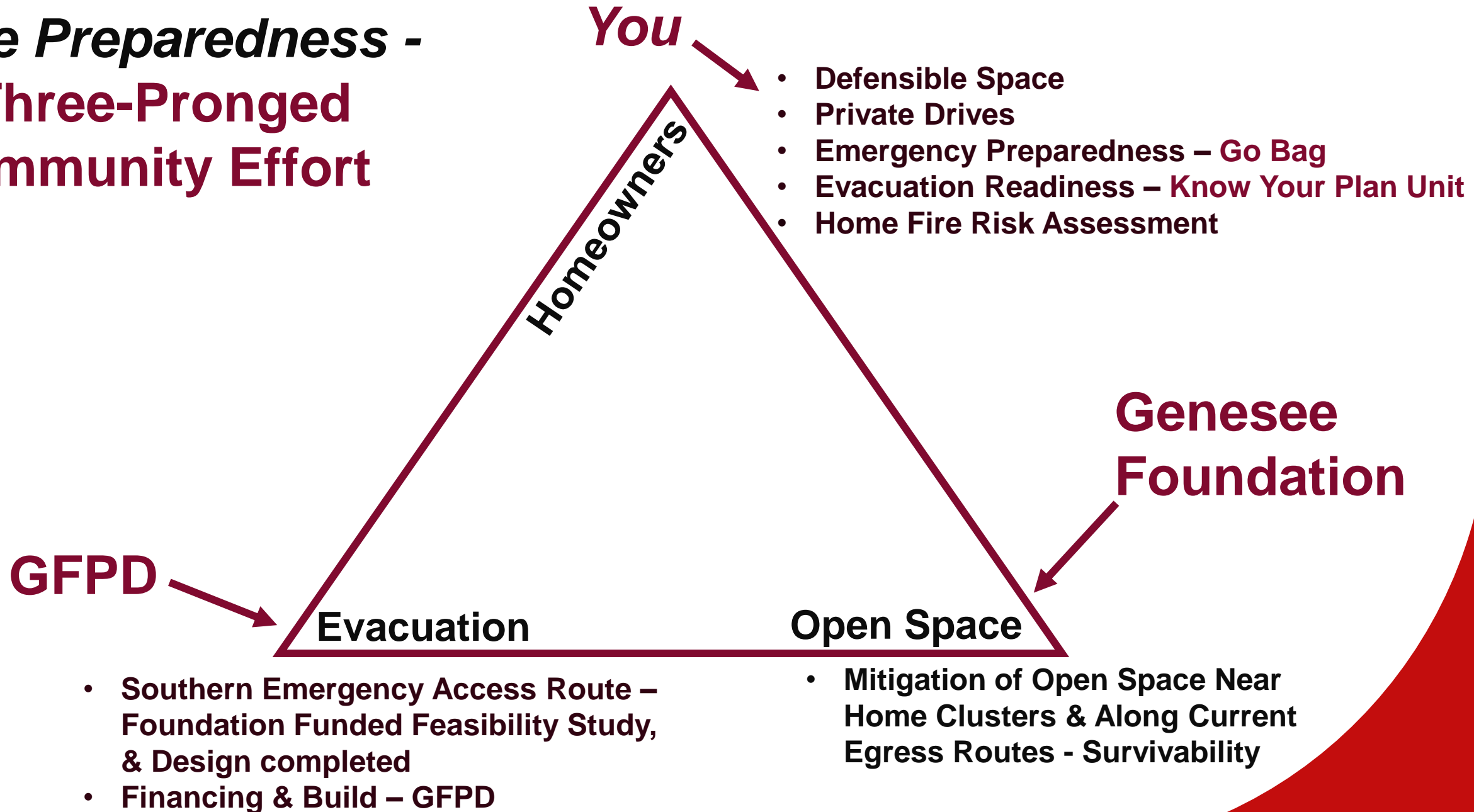


Models suggest that under our present egress structure (to I70) **estimated evacuation times are 3.5-4 hours** for most of Genesee.

# How Will the Route be Used?

- Designed and constructed to be safely navigated by passenger vehicles, law enforcement vehicles, and fire apparatus during an emergency
- Will not be used for public transport, public recreation, or other day to day use
- Will only be used for emergency ingress and egress, maintenance/mitigation, and as well as periodic training for firefighters and law enforcement personnel
- Will be access-controlled at both ends with gates, signage, locks, and monitoring
- Gates will be controlled by the Genesee Fire Protection District and the Jefferson County Sheriff's Department
- In the event of an emergency, the Jeffco Sheriff would control usage and the exit to Highway 74

# ***Fire Preparedness -*** **A Three-Pronged Community Effort**





# Community Support



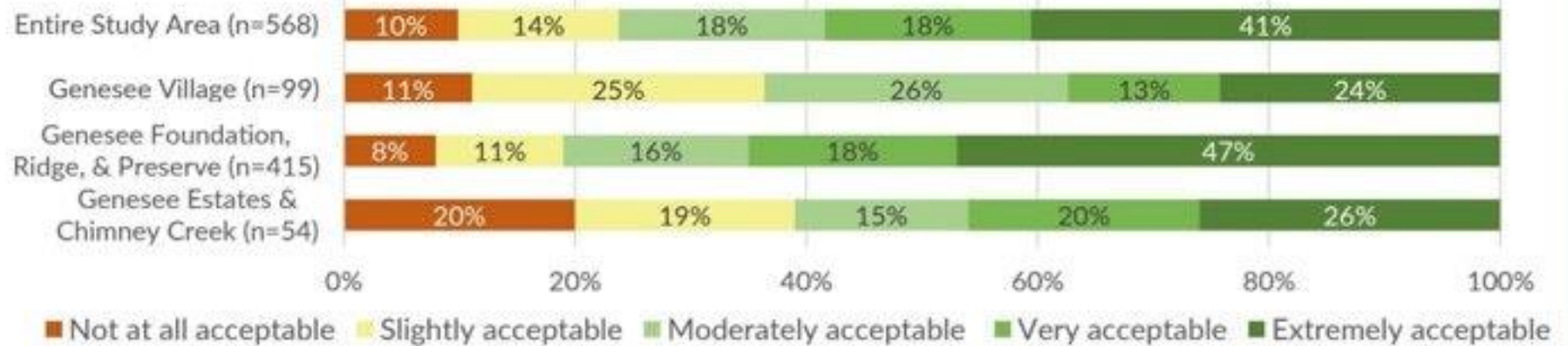
In 2021, a household survey was conducted for the GFPD. One of the questions was, 'Would you support the construction of a new emergency evacuation road?'



## What we might do in the future: Build an emergency road!



Would you support the construction of a new emergency evacuation road?  
Most survey respondents indicated support. Here's the breakdown by community:



\* n stands for the number of survey respondents in that community

# What is the history behind GFPD owning the Emergency Access Route?

- After the publication of the 2021 CWPP that repeated the need for a viable emergency access route, work began in earnest to examine options for an additional evacuation route that did not lead to I-70. In 2021, Genesee Fire Rescue obtained a conceptual engineering study to determine the feasibility of an evacuation route out of the southern portion of the Fire District, originating near Bitterroot Lane. The study provided preliminary confirmation of the viability of a route, but the specific routes proposed were unsuitable because of potential negative effects on water plant facilities.
- The Tri-Board Working Group was formed among representatives of Genesee Fire (Puffett, Balter, Mefford), Genesee Water (DeFillipo, Hurd) and the Genesee Foundation (Ackerman, Davies, Sarg) to address concerns of each of the entities in development of the EAR. In 2022, the Tri-Board Working Group created a Summary of Objectives and Key Parameters to facilitate construction of the EAR. One of the Key Parameters stated: “Ownership, maintenance, and use of the EAR will be governed by an operating agreement entered into between Genesee Fire Protection District and owners of property crossed by the EAR.”
- Further discussions and strategizing to move the project forward addressed design, government permits, and financing. Through this process, that spanned several months, the Fire District and the Genesee Foundation agreed that the most feasible structure was for the Fire District to own the Emergency Route. Ownership of the Route provides GFPD with authority to design, build and maintain the EAR to its specifications and requirements, and to control access. In addition, ownership by the Fire District, as a governmental entity, is beneficial for many reasons, including:
  - Genesee Fire can issue tax exempt bonds underwritten by property taxes payable by all property owners within the Fire District. This method is a cost-effective and efficient way of raising funds, and is the only viable option to fund the project.
  - GFPD ownership of the EAR streamlined the process of obtaining government permits. For instance, Jefferson County restrictions on the development of the land where the EAR is located could have prevented, or at least delayed, private development of a road. The limitations did not apply to the process available to the Fire District, as a governmental entity.
  - GFPD has governmental immunity, protecting it from liability.
- As contemplated by the Summary of Objectives and Key Parameters, Genesee Foundation and Genesee Water & Sanitation District entered into easement agreements with GFPD to grant GFPD ownership of the Emergency Access Route.

# Support From Other Fire Departments

- Letters of support from the Colorado Division of Fire Prevention & Control, the Jefferson County Sheriff Office, Highland Rescue Team, and Evergreen Fire & Rescue are on the Genesee Fire District website
- Evergreen Fire/Rescue Chief: In the event of a wildfire, more than one route is important; the road would allow access for Genesee Fire and Evergreen Fire to support each other's districts, reducing response times significantly
- Highland Rescue Chief: The additional route will greatly increase the safety of those involved. It will help residents evacuate quickly, and will also ease the mind of first responders to know there is a way out if fire blocks access to the North
- The Emergency Access Route facilitates assistance from other fire departments, including Evergreen, Foothills, Indian Hills, West Metro, South Metro, Elk Creek, North Fork, and Inter Canyon

# The Emergency Access Route Benefits All GFPD Residents

- How it is used depends on the specifics of the fire.
- The primary evacuation route for all residents will generally be via Exits 254 and 256 to I-70.
- If Fire District residents, including those living in Genesee Village or Chimney Creek, cannot access I-70, their only means of evacuation will be via the Emergency Access Route.
- Benefits to the entire District unrelated to evacuation:
  - Emergency ingress from the South, allowing more firefighting resources to access the District from South to defend property throughout the District.
  - The Emergency Access Route gives firefighters a safe route for escape so that they have the option to defend the District from a wildfire approaching from the South/West.

# Project Status

- We have a shovel-ready project (designed and ready to be built) for an emergency access route that is designed and constructed to be safely navigated by passenger vehicles, law enforcement vehicles, and fire apparatus during an emergency
- The estimated cost of construction and maintenance is \$8 million, for construction to begin in 2025
- The cost of building and maintaining the road is expected to be paid by bonds issued by GFPD
- GFPD Board has resolved to hold an election in May 2025 to determine whether the District is authorized to incur the indebtedness. The resolution is subject to the District determining the amount of debt and how it will be structured.
- If approved, the entire GFPD will be responsible for paying the mill levy, this includes Genesee Foundation, The Village at Genesee, Chimney Creek, Genesee Estates, and commercial properties.
- It is estimated that a \$1,000,000 home will see a \$300 per year tax increase.

# Project History

- CWPP identified need for an alternate route for evacuation
- 2021 - The Fire District (with support from GF) engaged Baseline Engineering to complete a limited conceptual study to assess the feasibility of building an emergency evacuation route to CO Highway 74 over property owned by the Genesee Foundation and GWSD
- 2022 - Genesee Fire Safety Committee completed matrix of potential routes
- 2022 - Following the work of Tri-Board Group, Genesee Foundation commissioned a full engineering study from Baseline Engineering exploring routes within the Southern Corridor according to Fire District specifications. Various routes were identified. A route was selected to maximize distance to homes and to accommodate Genesee Water facilities
- 2023 - Genesee Foundation and GW&SD granted easements to Genesee Fire Protection District to build and maintain the Emergency Access Route
- 2023 - The Genesee Foundation engaged Baseline to prepare a preliminary design for the recommended route and commissioned ZAK Dirt to perform design-assist and prepare a detailed cost estimate
- 2024 - GFPD commissioned final plans. Plans for a fully designed and engineered, ready to be built Emergency Access Route have been prepared



# Tri-Board Working Group

## Fire District – Water District – Genesee Foundation 2022

- Goals:
  - Work as a team in a collaborative and structured manner
  - Structured fact-based communications (Water District Concerns/Fire District Requirements)
  - Look forward not backward
- Results: compiled a summary of objectives and key parameters necessary for a purpose-built road connecting Montane Drive to Highway 74
  - Take into account Fire District Requirements and protection of Water District Facilities.
  - Defined a feasibility study area bounded by Montane Drive, Bitterroot Lane, Daisy Lane, and Hwy 74 (Southern Corridor)

Genesee Foundation representatives: Diane Davies, Rick Sarg, Wayne Ackerman

# Alternate Routes Considered

Genesee Fire and Safety Committee, aided by 3 Fire Professionals\*, evaluated **seven** corridors for:

- **Resident Evacuation Route Value** (Capacity, avoiding bottlenecks, reduce exposure to loss of key path, avoid direction of prevailing winds, and areas with increased accident potential)
- **Fire Protection Value** (Response time, Strategic Fire Protection value, Fire Breaks)
- **Probability of Success** (available land rights, permission required from private property owners for easements and mitigation)

**Highest Rated: GWSD (Corridor between Bitterroot and Daisy) to Highway 74**

\* Paul Admundson – Battalion Chief, Denver Fire with 20 years wildland fire experience, including Evergreen

Jason Puffett – Genesee Fire Protection District Chief

Pete Anderson – Retired Chief, West Metro Fire Rescue

# Route Considerations

Additional possible routes evaluated in Western, Eastern, & Southern directions

The Emergency Access Route selected:

- Almost entirely traverses Genesee Foundation open space, eliminating the need to acquire access rights from multiple private property owners;
- Requires less mitigation than any route traversing forested and narrow county or private drives;
- Can accommodate a two-lane road for both ingress of fire equipment and egress residents;
- Make it possible for firefighters to defend GFPD from wind-driven west-east directed fires.

# Next Steps – Special Election on May 6<sup>th</sup>


GFPD will hold a special election on May 6th, 2025, giving voters an opportunity to vote in favor of building the emergency access route. A “YES” vote means we will further develop this emergency route at a cost of approximately 8M. Residents will not pay a special assessment – rather, the GFPD will issue a 30-year bond to cover this expense. The bond will be paid via a mill levy increase. The amount of the mill levy increase varies for each household since it will be based on the value of one’s home.

- For planning purposes, the tax increase to homeowners will be approximately \$300 annually for a \$1M home.
- By financing the evacuation route in this way, both current and future GFPD residents share the costs for this critically important project.

We encourage you to **Vote Yes** to build an emergency access route out of Genesee in the May vote – your potentially life-saving route.

# Questions?

Please contact [emergencyaccessroute@googlegroups.com](mailto:emergencyaccessroute@googlegroups.com) if you have any questions or would like to be an Ambassador for the route and help spread the word on the importance of this election.

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